Don Nixon Sought Dominican Deals

By Jack Anderson

F. Donald Nixon, the President's irrepressible brother, showed up in the Dominican Republic in October, 1969, to talk business with President Joaquin Balaguer.

In a back room of the presidential palace, they discussed what Donald could do for the Dominican Republic and what the Dominicans could do for Donald.

Out of the powwow came mining concessions for Donald and an opportunity to build a luxury apartment complex on government-owned ocean frontage in Santo Domingo.

In return, Balaguer wanted Donald to use his influence with the White House. Recalls businessman John Meier, who accompanied Donald Nixon to Santo Domingo:

"Balaguer was talking in front of a group of people, and he was blunt about it. He said he needed White House help in his election, and he said he needed a bigger share of the sugar quota.

"Later on, when everybody was outside, Balaguer said something to his interpreter, and the interpreter came over and whispered to Don. Balaguer and Don then went to the back room and closed the door."

The following year, the Dominican sugar quota was increased from 458,000 to 515,000 tons. And two veteran Republican campaigners, Clifton White and ex-Rep. Donald (Buz) Lukens, went to Santo Domingo during Balaguer's election campaign.

Three witnesses have sworn to us in affidavits that they heard Donald say he never embarked on his business adventures without first checking with the President. But White House sources tell us the President was so concerned about Donald's wheeling and dealing that he asked aide John Ehrlichman to keep an eye on Donald and, finally, ordered a tap on Donald's telephone.

Ehrlichman became particularly suspicious of Donald's dealings with Meier, formerly a business aide of billionaire Howard Hughes. Once, Ehrlichman asked the President's personal attorney, Herbert Kalmbach, to fly to Las Vegas to check on Meier. Another time, the President's friend, Bebe Rebozo, telephoned Hughes headquarters in Las Vegas and demanded that Meier be kept away from Donald.

Subsequently, Rebozo made another call to Hughes headquarters and angrily reported that his informants had just told him Meier and Donald were together at that moment at the Orange County airport.

Meier was subsequently sued by Hughes who charged his former associate with skimming off profits from mining claims. Meier is also under indictment in Nevada on tax evasion charges. He claims the charges are politically motivated and are an outgrowth of the White House phone taps on Donald.

My associate George Clifford flew to Vancouver, British Columbia, to talk to Meier about the Dominican deal. "We were in the Dominican Republic looking at deals," confirmed Meier. "Donald toured the property we were offered for the apartments. He did all the talking with Balaguer."

Clifford also flew to New York City to see businessman Thomas E. Murray Jr., who made the arrangements for the Dominican trip. "They took us on a helicopter tour of properties that were possible sites for real estate development," recalled Murray. "But our main purpose was to have the minister of mining come up with an area for exploration for us."

In Los Angeles, Clifford questioned Arthur Blech, the certified accountant who handles President Nixon's taxes and who also prepared the proposal for the Santo Domingo apartment deal.

The proposal, obtained by us, envisioned "10,000 apartment units (garden type), two and three bedrooms . . . The land (250 acres) would be transferred to a Joint Venture (corporation) by the Dominican government free and clear of any encumberances and also improved with all the necessary streets, curbs (offsite improvements) and utilities . . ."

Interviewed at his posh office near the LaBrea tar pits, Blech insisted that Donald wasn't involved in the housing deal and that he alone discovered the site while visiting the Dominican Republic with Meier.

Our sources say Donald still has an interest in the mines, called Los Canitas, which are rich in manganese and copper. The housing venture, however, has fallen through. Donald refused to comment when reached by telephone.

Footnote: Donald Nixon was given the red carpet treatment during his Santo Domingo visit. His party took over an entire floor of a fashionable hotel, and President Balaguer posted 30 armed guards in the hotel to protect them. Balaguer also gave them a view of the island's entire coastline from former dictator Rafael Trujillo's 350-foot yacht, with the chief of the Dominican Navy aboard. Finally, there was a sit-down dinner at the presidential palace. Some 600 guests, including the diplomatic corps and the military brass, stood in line to shake hands with Donald.

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